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SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR BOLTON'S MEETING WITH MOROCCAN PERMREP

¶1. (SBU) In a brief March 2 courtesy call on Ambassador Bolton, recently arrived Moroccan Perm Rep El Mostafa SAHEL said that Morocco's autonomy proposal for the Western Sahara has been completed and that consultations between the government of Morocco and Moroccan political parties were scheduled to begin March 2. He said that the government hoped to have an agreed document by the end of March.

¶2. (SBU) Sahel said that much of the impetus for this proposal has come from King Mohamed VI, for whom economic and political reform has been a priority and who views the stalemate in the Western Sahara as a barrier to regional economic and political development. He said that King Mohamed wants a political solution that will provide the region with stability and peace to allow the problems of poverty, terrorism and illegal immigration to be addressed. He said the proposal would provide "special treatment" for the region. He said that Morocco only asked that the proposal preserve Morocco's "integrity and sovereignty." He said Morocco sought "to integrate, not disintegrate, the country."

¶3. (SBU) Sahel said that Morocco is ready to negotiate. That said, he suggested that Morocco needed "somebody" with whom to discuss this proposal and needed friends to encourage Algeria to be that partner. Of course, he said, the Polisario could participate, but "everyone knew that Algeria controlled the Polisario and that the Polisario does nothing without Algeria." Sahel confessed to not really being able to understand what Algeria wants. He said that he had spent six hours speaking with Algerian President Bouteflika, during which they became friends. But after the conversation Sahel still did not know what Algeria sought from Morocco with regard to the Western Sahara other than "time."

¶4. (SBU) Ambassador Bolton reviewed his background and continuing interest in the Western Sahara, including his work in IO when MINURSO was created and later with Personal Envoy James Baker. He said the U.S. is looking forward to a Moroccan "substantial proposal" that will change the political atmosphere in a positive way, breaking the negotiating deadlock of the last 15 years and solving a problem that has been around for over three decades. Once the proposal is ready to go, we will move from there. Sahel said that he would update Ambassador Bolton as soon as any news develops on the proposal.
BOLTON